

CLAIMS

- 1 1. A method of sending a video segment over a computer network, comprising:
- 2 (a) acquiring a video segment;
- 3 (b) accepting an indication of an intent to send the video segment over the computer
- 4 network; and
- 5 (c) in response to the indication accepted in step (b), automatically
- 6 (i) assuring that the video segment is in a streaming video format;
- 7 (ii) creating an identifier for the video segment; and
- 8 (iii) sending the video segment and the identifier over the computer network to
- 9 the receiving computer.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c)(i) comprises:
- 2 (c1) determining if a format of the video segment is compatible with a streaming video
- 3 format;
- 4 (c2) if the result of the determination performed in step (d1) is negative, converting the
- 5 video segment to a temporary, uncompressed video segment in a format that is
- 6 compatible with a streaming video format; and
- 7 (c3) converting the video segment present after the conclusion of steps (d1) and (d2)
- 8 into a streaming multimedia format; and
- 9 wherein step (c)(ii) comprises:
- 10 (c4) creating and storing temporarily a still image characteristic of the video segment
- 11 in streaming multimedia format, the still image being encoded in a format suitable for
- 12 display as a single invariant frame; and
- 13 wherein step (c)(iii) comprises:

Atty. Docket No.: ACI-001 (276/7)

(c5) transferring over the computer network to the receiving computer the temporarily stored video segment in streaming multimedia format together with the temporarily stored still image.

The method of claim 1 further comprising storing temporarily the video segment in streaming multimedia format prior to its transfer over the computer network.

The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the transferred video segment and the still image in a storage medium under the control of the receiving computer.

The method of claim 3 further comprising deleting the temporarily stored video segment and the temporarily stored still image from the temporary storage location, thereby freeing the temporary storage location for reuse.

The method of claim 1 further comprising requesting a sender of the video segment to select a method of distribution of the video segment to a viewer.

The method of claim 1 wherein the video segment comprises an image portion and an audio portion.

The method of claim 1 further comprising, after step (a) and before step (c), the step of compressing the video segment.

The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) further comprises sending with the video segment one or more indicia selected from the group consisting of an identifier of the sender of the file, an access privilege associated with the file, information indicative of a time period during which the file will be accessible, and information indicative of a number of instances that the file may be accessed.

A method of distributing a video segment over a computer network, comprising

- 2 (a) acquiring a video segment;
- 3 (b) accepting an indication of an intent to send the video segment over the computer
- 4 network;
- 5 (c) in response to the indication accepted in step (b), automatically
- 6 (i) assuring that the video segment is in a streaming video format;
- 7 (ii) creating an identifier for the video segment; and
- 8 (iii) sending the video segment and the identifier over the computer network to
- 9 the receiving computer; and
- 10 (d) distributing the video segment over the computer network to a viewer for display as a
- 11 streaming video segment.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of distributing the video segment comprises
- 12 transmitting link information that a viewer can employ to request the transmission of a
- 13 specific video segment for display as a streaming video segment.
12. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of distributing the video segment comprises
- 13 transmitting the video segment for display as a streaming video segment as a consequence
- 14 of being sent a link in an e-mail.
13. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of distributing the video segment comprises
- 14 transmitting the video segment embedded in a web page for display as a streaming video
- 15 segment.
14. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of distributing the video segment comprises
- 15 distributing the video segment in accordance with an outcome of a test selected from the
- 16 group of tests consisting of checking an identity of the transmitter of the video segment,

checking an access privilege associated with the video segment, checking whether a time of transmission conforms to a time period during which the video segment may be accessed and checking whether a number of instances that the video segment may be accessed has been reached.

15. A system for sending a video over a computer network , comprising:

(a) a first computer adapted to be connected to other computers over a computer network, the first computer having operating on it;

(1) a first module for acquiring a video segment;

(2) a second module for generating an identifier associated with the video segment;

(3) a third module for accepting an indication of intent to send the video segment to another computer;

(4) a fourth module for automatically assuring that the video segment is in a streaming video format; and

(5) a fifth module for automatically sending the video segment and the identifier over the computer network to the receiving computer; and

(b) a second computer comprising a central repository, the second computer adapted to be connected to other computers over the computer network, the second computer having operating on it:

(6) a sixth module for automatically receiving the video segment and its associated identifier sent by the first computer over the computer network; and

(7) a seventh module for storing the video segment and associated identifier in the central repository;

19 whereby the video segment and its associated identifier are transferred to and stored in the  
20 centralized repository.

1 16. The system of claim 15 wherein the first module comprises an apparatus selected from  
2 the group consisting of a video camera, a computer adapted to produce digital video  
3 segments, and a video machine capable of accessing a preexisting video.

1 17. The system of claim 15 wherein the first module is adapted to provide a video segment  
2 comprising an image portion and an audio portion.

1 18. The system of claim 15, further comprising a module adapted to compress the video  
2 segment into a machine-readable file smaller than the video segment.

2 19. The system of claim 15 wherein the central repository is adapted to record one or more  
3 indicia selected from the group consisting of an identifier of the transmitter of the video  
4 segment, information indicating a storage location of the video segment, an access  
5 privilege associated with the video segment, a time period during which the video  
6 segment is accessible and information indicative of a number of instances that the video  
segment may be accessed.

1 20. The system of claim 15, further comprising a module adapted to distribute the video  
2 segment over the computer network for display as a streaming video segment.

1 21. The system of claim 20 wherein the module adapted to distribute the video segment is  
2 adapted to distribute link information that a viewer can employ to request the  
3 transmission over the computer network of a specific video segment for display as a  
4 streaming video segment.

1 22. The system of claim 20 wherein the module adapted to distribute the video segment is  
2 adapted to distribute a link to the video segment in an e-mail for display of the video  
3 segment as a streaming video segment.

1 23. The system of claim 20 wherein the module adapted to distribute the video segment is  
2 adapted to distribute the video segment embedded in a web page for display as a  
3 streaming video segment.

1 24. A computer program recorded on a machine-readable medium, comprising:

2 (a) a module adapted to acquire a video segment;

3 (b) a module adapted to acquire an indication of intent to send the video segment over a  
4 computer network;

5 (c) a module adapted to automatically generate an identifier for the video segment; and

6 (d) a module adapted to automatically transfer the video segment and its associated  
7 identifier as a machine-readable file over the computer network;

8 whereby the video segment and its associated identifier are created, associated and  
9 transmitted over a computer network to a central repository for recording in the  
10 repository, the transfer occurring in response to the indication of intent.

1 25. The computer program of claim 24, further comprising a module adapted to automatically  
2 compress the video segment.

1 26. The computer program of claim 24, further comprising a module adapted to automatically  
2 decompress a video segment selected from the set of video segments recorded in the  
3 computerized central repository, the video segment having been received over the  
4 computer network from the central repository.

1 27. A computer program recorded on a machine-readable medium, comprising:

- 2 (a) a module adapted to receive a video segment, the video segment having been  
3 transmitted over the computer network in association with an identifier;  
4 (b) a module adapted to store in a central repository the video segment as a machine-  
5 readable file;  
6 (c) a module adapted to record in the central repository the machine-readable identifier of  
7 the video segment;  
8 (d) a module adapted to transmit over the computer network the identifier of the video  
9 segment recorded in the computerized central repository; and  
10 (e) a module adapted to transmit over the computer network the video segment recorded  
11 as a machine-readable file in the computerized central repository;

12 whereby the video segment is capable of being displayed as a streaming video segment.

- 13 28. The computer program of claim 27 wherein module (c) comprises a module adapted to  
14 record one or more indicia selected from the group consisting of an identifier of the  
15 transmitter of the video segment, a storage location of the video segment, an access  
16 privileges associated with the video segment, a time period during which the video  
17 segment will be accessible and information indicative of a number of instances that the  
18 video segment may be accessed.

- 19 29. A method for sharing video images comprising:

- 20 a) uploading a video image to a video server;  
21 b) tagging said video image with an identification tag;  
22 c) supplying said identification tag to an addressee; and

d) serving said video image to said addressee.

30. A method for sharing video images comprising:

a) receiving a video image identifier generated by a video sender, wherein said video sender uploads said identified video image to a server;

b) using said video image identifier to request said identified video image from said server; and

c) accepting delivery of said identified video image.